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ABSTRACT

The effects of receiving scholarships on female students age 25 or older was studied at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). Questionnaire responses were received from 21 recipients of Newcombe Scholarships, which are awarded to mature, second career, and/or disabled female students at UMCP. The respondents received awards in 1981 and/or 1982. Objectives were to determine the effects of the scholarship on retention, adjustment, and rate of progress, as well as the current occupational and educational status of the recipient. It was found that receiving a Newcombe Scholarship supported the women's academic adjustment by positively influencing their ability to concentrate on the student role. Receiving the financial aid also positively influenced UMCP's image as a supportive environment containing caring personnel. This environment support helped balance the interpersonal and academic challenges faced by these students. Data are included on participants' age and marital status; number of children; disability status; academic status (undergraduate/graduate students, full-time or part-time, and progress in working toward a degree); and whether the women were employed full- or part-time; and academic retention. The questionnaire is appended. (SW)

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PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF A FINANCIAL AID SCHOLARSHIP ON RETURNING WOMEN STUDENTS

Barbara J. Goldberg, Beverly R. Greenfeig and
Susan L. Habbersett

Research Report # 7-85

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Perceived Effects of a Financial Aid Scholarship on Returning
Women Students

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Summary

The Returning Students Program of the Counseling Center, UMCP, recently conducted a study on the effects of receiving scholarships on female students age 25 or older. The study revealed that financial aid has a strongly positive influence on three areas: retention, concentration on academic work, and attitude toward UMCP.

Twenty-one Newcombe Scholarship recipients responded to a questionnaire. The results of this survey found that receiving a Newcombe Scholarship supported the women's academic adjustment by positively influencing their ability to concentrate on the student role. Receiving the financial aid also positively influenced UMCP's image as a supportive environment containing caring personnel. This environmental support helped balance the interpersonal and academic challenges faced by these students.

The study's positive evaluations of the effects of the Newcombe Scholarship lend empirical support for this form of financial help for the adult, female college student.

Introduction

Financial aid support for American college students often favors dependent, full-time, traditional age college students. Adults over 25 years of age, females, and part-time students are seldom given priority for financial aid. One source of support that does attend to this sub-group is the Charlotte W. Newcombe Scholarship Foundation. The Foundation provides scholarship aid for mature/second-career women students and disabled students.

This study reports on the use and impact of such funds on certain students at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Newcombe scholarships are made available to mature, second career, and/or disabled female students at the University of Maryland, College Park campus. To be eligible for an award, applicants must be at least 25 years old, full or part-time students, undergraduate or graduate, and have completed at least half the credits necessary for either their bachelor's or master's degree. Life circumstances, family responsibilities, and other extraordinary needs are considered in determining the financial awards to these students.

The present study documents some of the effects of having received Newcombe Scholarships, as reported by the scholarship recipients.

Methods

Data on the effect of having received financial aid were collected from the total population of early recipients of Newcombe scholarships: those with awards for the Fall 1981, Spring 1982 and/or Fall 1982 semesters. Twenty-five recipients who received awards during that period were asked to respond to a questionnaire (see Appendix A) in order to determine: (a) the effects of the Newcombe Scholarship on retention, concentration, rate of progress, and psychological support; and (b) the current occupational and educational status of the recipient. The questionnaire, developed for this study, asked the

individuals to indicate the effect of receiving the scholarship, using a five-point scale (1= very positive to 5= very negative). The instrument also asked for current occupational and educational information.

Data were collected by mailing a cover letter, questionnaire and reply envelope to each individual. Follow-up requests were mailed and phone calls were made until at least 80% of those asked to respond had responded.

Results

Of the total 25 women, 21 (84%) returned the questionnaire. The results are described below and shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Age and Marital Status

The participants were females ranging in age from 27 to 60. Of the respondents, 29% were married, 29% were single and 42% were divorced at the time of receiving the scholarship.

Number of Children

Twenty-nine percent of the women did not have children, while 23% had one child, 38% had two children, and 10% had more than two children at the time of receiving the scholarship.

Disability Status

Thirty-three percent of the women were disabled at the time of receiving the scholarship.

Academic Status

At the time of receiving the scholarship, 52% of the subjects were undergraduate and 48% were graduate students. At the present time, 48% are attending college (29% full-time, 19% part-time). While 10% are now working toward a bachelor's

degree, 90% have completed them. Similarly, 38% have completed master's degrees, while 24% are presently working toward doctoral degrees.

Current Occupational Status

At the time of the survey, 81% of the women were employed either full-time (57%) or part-time (24%).

Table 1

Number and Percentage Distribution of Respondents for Selected Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	n	%
Age		
25 to 30	5	24
31 to 39	6	28
40 to 49	5	24
50 to 59	4	19
60 or older	1	5
Marital Status		
Single	6	29
Married	6	29
Divorced	9	42
Number of children		
0	6	29
1	5	23
2	8	38
more than 2	2	10
Disability		
Disabled	7	33
Not disabled	14	67
Academic Status		
Undergraduate	11	52
Graduate	10	48
Occupational Status		
Not employed	4	19
Employed full-time	12	57
Employed part-time	5	24

Academic Retention

The women reported that receiving the Newcombe Scholarship had a positive effect on academic retention for 95% of them (71% very positive, 24% positive).

Concentration on Academic Work

The women reported that the scholarship had a positive effect (86%) on their ability to concentrate on their scholastic work (48% very positive, 38% positive).

Attitude Toward the University

For 90% of the women, the financial aid had a positive effect (71% very positive, 29% positive) on their perception of the University as a helpful place. Receiving the scholarship also had a 100% positive effect (76% very positive, 24% positive) on the women's belief that the University's personnel were interested in their welfare, progress, and goals as students.

Rate of Academic Progress

Fifty-two percent of the recipients felt that the scholarship had a positive influence (19% very positive, 33% positive) on their rate of progress toward completion of their degrees.

Table 2

Percent of Responses to Questionnaire (Part 1)

Item Number	Issue	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative	Total Percent
1a	Retention	71	24	5	0	0	100%
1b	Concentration	48	38	14	0	0	100%
1c	Rate of Progress	19	33	48	0	0	100%
1d	Attitude toward University	71	29	0	0	0	100%
1e	Attitude toward personnel	76	24	0	0	0	100%

Discussion

Surveys of scholarship recipients can be useful to universities in assessing their efforts to assist students, in this case the female adult student population. The results of this study are a useful supplement to the cumulative judgments of the financial aid personnel of the Returning Students Program at the Counseling Center.

The research revealed that the Newcombe Scholarships had a strongly positive influence on three areas: retention, concentration, and attitude toward the University. Retention of students is an important concern for higher education. This survey found that receiving a Newcombe Scholarship supported the women's academic adjustment by positively influencing their ability to concentrate on the student role. Receiving the scholarship positively influenced their perception of the University as a helpful place, and their belief that persons are interested in them. As one recipient commented, "More of this kind of help should be made available."

Research is a tool for practitioners which can provide feedback on the effectiveness of services offered to adult, female students. Use of a survey of financial aid recipients seems to be a promising tool in furthering this effort to gather feedback. This study's positive evaluations of the effects of the Newcombe Scholarship lend empirical support for this form of financial help for the adult female college student.

APPENDIX A

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NEWCOMBE RECIPIENTS FOR 1981-82 YEAR

1. Please answer each item below by placing a number from 1 to 5 in the space next to each item. Use the scale below for choosing the most appropriate answer for each item:

- 1 = Very Positive Effect
2 = Some Positive Effect
3 = Neutral or Uncertain

- 4 = Some Negative Effect
5 = Very Negative Effect

- a. RETENTION: What effect did receiving the Newcombe award have on your staying in school:
_____ 1) during the semester for which you received the award?
_____ 2) in future semesters?
- b. CONCENTRATION: What effect did receiving the Newcombe award have on your ability to concentrate fully on your work as a student during the semester for which you received the award?

- c. PACE: What effect did receiving the Newcombe award have on the rate at which you progressed and/or finished your education (e.g. Did you progress and/or finish any faster?)

- d. SUPPORT: What effect did receiving the Newcombe award have on your perception of the University as a helpful place?

- e. SUPPORT: What effect did receiving the Newcombe award have on your belief that there are persons interested in you (e.g., in your welfare, your progress, your career goals, and/or your life as a student)?

2. CURRENT STATUS

a. WORK

1. Are you presently working? _____ Yes, full-time _____ Yes, part-time
_____ No, but looking _____ No
2. If presently working, what is the title of your job?

3. If presently working, what type of agency/organization/firm (e.g. elementary school, Federal Department of Labor, clothing retail, etc.)?

b. SCHOOL

1. Are you presently enrolled in school? _____ Yes, full-time
_____ Yes, part-time _____ No, but planning to attend _____ No
2. If enrolled, please fill in the following:
Name of School _____
Major Course of Study _____
Degree Sought _____
3. What, if any, educational programs have you completed so far?
(e.g., degrees received) _____
4. What are your future educational plans, if any?

c. OTHER

1. If you are not in school or working, how would you describe your present activities? _____

THANKS FOR YOUR COOPERATION. PLEASE RETURN IN THE ENCLOSED REPLY ENVELOPE.